

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 04774 290608Z
ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-12 MCE-00 IO-13 EB-08 COME-00 AID-05
TRSE-00 OMB-01 /110 W
-----018860 290625Z /16

R 281132Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0495
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MASS, IN, SW, UK, FR
SUBJECT: INDIAN PURCHASE OF A DEEP PENETRATION STRIKE
AIRCRAFT (DPSA)

1. PROSPECTIVE INDIAN PURCHASE OF A DPSA FIGURED AGAIN
IN THE MARCH 28 DELHI PRESS. DEFENCE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM
DISCUSSED THE ISSUE THE PREVIOUS DAY WHEN REPLYING TO THE
LOK SABHA DEBATE ON HIS MINISTRY'S DEMAND FOR GRANTING PART OF
THE GENERAL CONSIDERATION OF THE BUDGET NOW GOING ON IN PARLIAMENT.
THE TIMES OF INDIA AND THE STATESMAN ALSO CARRIED ITEMS ON
THE DPSA. THESE WERE BASED, WE UNDERSTAND, ON A SESSION
THEIR REPORTERS HAD WITH THE DEFENCE MINISTRY'S PUBLIC
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 04774 290608Z

RELATIONS DIRECTOR.

2. RAM'S REMARKS FOLLOWED EARLIER DISCUSSION BY MPS OF THE
DPSA IN THE DEBATE. THE MINISTER MENTIONED THAT SOME OF
INDIA'S PLANES SUCH AS THE CANBERRA HAD BECOME OLD. THEY
COULDN'T BE REPLACED BY OTHER OLD PLANES, BUT INSTEAD BY
MODERN MODELS. RAM TOLD THE MPS THAT A TEAM OF EXPERTS HAD

JUST GONE TO THREE COUNTRIES AND "HAD PROBABLY SUBMITTED ITS REPORT TODAY." THE REPORT WOULD BE CONSIDERED SOON IN A CABINET COMMITTEE. IT WILL THEN BE DECIDED WHICH OF THESE COUNTRIES THE PLANE SHOULD BE BROUGHT FROM, AND INDIA WOULD BUY IT FROM THAT COUNTRY. ALONG WITH THE PURCHASE, HE SAID, THE GOI WILL IMPOSE THE CONDITION THAT THE PLANES WILL BE MANUFACTURED IN INDIA, SPARES AND PARTS WILL BE PRODUCED HERE, AND THE OTHER COUNTRY WILL PURCHASE THEM FROM INDIA. (FOREGOING IS EMBASSY SUMMARY OF RAM'S VERBATIM REMARKS, MADE IN HINDI).

3. THE TOI STORY MENTIONED THAT THE HIGH-LEVEL TEAM ON THE DPSA IS REPORTED TO HAVE SUBMITTED ITS REPORT TO THE GOI ON MARCH 27, AND THOUGH IT HAS NOT MADE ANY PINPOINTED RECOMMENDATION ABOUT THE CHOICE OF THE AIRCRAFT, THE DECISION HAS MOST PROBABLY NARROWED DOWN TO THE MIRAGE F-1 AND THE JAGUAR. THE SWEDISH VIGGEN IS ALSO UNDER CONSIDERATION, IT ADDED. THE STATESMAN ACCOUNT SAID THAT THREE PLANES ARE THE MAIN CONTENDERS, "ALTHOUGH THE CHOICE NOW SEEMS TO HAVE NARROWED DOWN TO JAGUAR AND MIRAGE IN THAT ORDER."

4. BOTH ACCOUNTS MENTION THAT THE OUTLAY ON THE PLANES WILL BE SPREAD OVER TEN YEARS, A POINT WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN LIGHT OF THE CRITICISM WHICH HAS RECENTLY APPEARED IN THE PRESS OF THE HEAVY EXPENDITURE INVOLVED. (THE STATESMAN ARTICLE HAD IT THAT BECAUSE OF THIS TEN YEAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 04774 290608Z

SPREAD "THE LARGE OUTLAY NEEDED...NEED NOT BE A DAUNTING FACTOR.") THE TOI REPORTED THAT ONCE THE CHOICE IS MADE THE IAF IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE ABOUT 40 AIRCRAFT IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

5. BOTH RAM'S COMMENTS AND THE NEWSPAPER STORIES WERE ADDRESSED TO THE QUESTION OF WHICH PLANE WOULD BE SELECTED, AND SEEMED TO IMPLY THAT A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO GO AHEAD WITH A DPSA WAS NOT AT ISSUE. ANOTHER VIEW HAD APPEARED A FEW DAYS EARLIER IN THE HINDU. ITS WELL-INFORMED DELHI CORRESPONDENT, G.K. REDDY, WROTE "THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO BE FULLY SATISFIED THAT THE COUNTRY'S DEFENCE REQUIREMENTS REALLY CALL FOR THE ACQUISITION OF A NEW BOMBER FLEET BEFORE FINALLY COMMITTING ITSELF TO THE PURCHASE OF A FEW (DPSA) SQUADRONS." ACCORDING TO REDDY, JAGJIVAN RAM HAS TAKEN NOTE OF THE ARGUMENT THAT IT IS NOT DESIRABLE TO EMBARK ON AN ENTIRELY NEW MANUFACTURING LINE AND HAS ASKED THE IAF TO PREPARE A MORE COMPREHENSIVE BRIEF ON THE STRATEGIC, FINANCIAL, AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF A CHANGE-OVER THE LATEST GENERATION OF STRIKE AIRCRAFT CAPABLE OF SUPERSONIC PERFORMANCE. "THERE WILL HAVE TO BE A POLICY DECISION FIRST TO GO FOR THESE HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED FIGHTER-BOMBER PLANES BEFORE THE GOI CAN DECIDE

WHICH OF THE THREE MAKES NOW UP FOR CONSIDERATION...WOULD MEET
INDIA'S REQUIREMENTS...," HE WROTE. "APART FROM GIVING
DUE THOUGHT TO THE POLITICAL VIEW VOICED IN SOME CIRCLES
CLOSE TO THE JANATA PARTY THAT THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT
FOREIGN POLICY PURSUITS DO NOT JUSTIFY SUCH A BIG
FINANCIAL COMMITMENT FOR ACQUIRING A NEW BOMBER FLEET
EVEN FOR THE PERFECTLY LEGITIMATE PURPOSE OF REPLACING
THE OUTDATED HUNTER AND CANBERRA SQUADRONS, THE GOVERNMENT,
HAS TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE ARGUMENT THAT THE SAME
PURPOSE COULD BE SERVED TO A LIMITED EXTENT BY DEVELOPING
THE MIG/MI; MANUFACTURING LINE FOR MAKING THE LATEST VERSIONS
OF THIS VERY VERSATILE AIRCRAFT." REDDY ALSO MENTIONED
THAT "ONE OF THE SUGGESTIONS BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT IS
THAT THE PRESENT INDIAN-DESIGNED HF-24 AIRFRAME COULD
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PAGE 04 NEW DE 04774 290608Z

BE MATED TO A MORE POWERFUL ENGINE DEVELOPED WITH FOREIGN
TECHNICAL COLLABORATION TO ATTAIN SUPERSONIC CAPABILITY
AT A VERY LIMITED EXPENSE.
GOHEEN

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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